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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

18 February 1960

PART I

OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST

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NUCLEAR TEST TALKS

In a move to divide the Western delegations, the Soviet delegate at Geneva on 16 February formally rejected the recent American proposal for a limited test ban treaty and offered to accept a set of temporary standards for detecting underground nuclear explosions, provided the West agrees to Khrushchev's proposal favoring a fixed number of on-site inspections of suspected nuclear explosions each year.

Adopting suggestions along the lines put forward by the British delegate on 15 January, the Soviet plan calls for temporary control measures during the approximately two to three years needed for setting up the inspection control system, and in effect accepts, within the fixed-quota limitation, the Western contention that almost any unidentified seismic event should be eligible for an on-site inspection. Under the Soviet proposal, the control organization would, during the two- to three-year period, develop and make more precise the number of criteria for sending out inspection teams.

The British delegate had asked Soviet delegate Tsarapkin on 15 January whether the Soviet Union could agree to Western criteria for dispatching inspection teams if the West were to accept the quota proposal. The Soviet delegate said the British question deserved "careful attention" and remarked that it could "possibly" provide the way for resolving the technical impasse.

Moscow may have believed that the British suggestion

could lead to a formula to ban all testing "temporarily" until a satisfactory system for detecting and identifying small underground explosions is developed, after which the ban would become permanent. In presenting its new plan, the USSR probably believes that it will divert the negotiations from the American proposal for a partial treaty and effectively promote the Soviet position favoring an initial ban on all testing.

After the presentation of the American plan for a partial treaty on 11 February, the Soviet delegation at Geneva moved immediately to discredit it by posing a series of questions designed to portray the American proposal as a "conspiracy" to permit the resumption of nuclear testing. Tsarapkin charged that the proposal not only sanctioned a resumption of tests but "legalized" it, and strongly implied that the United States had plans to resume testing of small nuclear weapons. Hinting that once tests were resumed they could not be limited, he charged that other states might have different weapons development programs, necessitating tests in "other environments which they would be free to carry out."

Before introducing his counterproposal on 16 February, Tsarapkin charged that after 15 months the talks had been close to agreement on a comprehensive treaty until the "180-degree American shift." Calling the US move a "serious and dangerous step backward," he put forward his new proposal "to overcome this serious obstacle." He

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avoided giving the Soviet view of what "specific quota number" should be adopted, stating that the idea should first be agreed to "in principle."

In debate with the British delegate, he attempted to draw the British into an admission that London's position differed significantly from the United States' view as to the advisability of testing during the present negotiations. He charged that the difficulties in the negotiations were caused by the inspection issue, "on which the USSR had accepted

the principle proposed by the British prime minister."

Moscow probably believes that its firm rejection of the American plan, coupled with its concession to the Western technical position, will make it increasingly difficult for the United States to continue its opposition to the Soviet scheme for a small, politically determined, annual quota of inspections, particularly in light of British support of the general concept. [REDACTED]

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